



Louisville Metro Police Patrolman  
**Jim Wood**

ABBIE DARST | PROGRAM COORDINATOR

**P**atrolman Jim Wood just embarked on his 24<sup>th</sup> year in law enforcement. Beginning his law enforcement career with the Louisville Police Department, and transitioning to Louisville Metro during the 2003 merger, Wood has had a prosperous and varied career serving the citizens of Louisville and his fellow officers. Married with a son and step son, Wood is on the brink of retiring from the department to which he dedicated nearly a quarter century of his life. But as a guy who simply loves fixing things, Wood says he still has a lot to offer as he prepares for another opportunity to serve the people of Louisville.

**I was 35 when I began my law enforcement career.** Before that, I was working with business machines as a field service technician — always worked on fixing things. Especially when I went back to get my degree, that’s all I did was work as a field service rep.

**I started as a recruit in September 1990.** My first assignment was in the downtown-Louisville area in the projects. I started out on day work, then went to overnights — that was a rude awakening. I had never experienced small children playing outside at 3 a.m. like it was noon. I’m not a night-life person, so meeting those people was a little stressful at times.

**My first day on the job,** my training officer, Robin Brink, and I got a report run to University Hospital. Brink was driving and trying to explain things to me. We pulled over in front of University Hospital, and out came two U of L security guys chasing this guy in a gown for some unknown reason. My training officer said, ‘Get out there rookie — chase that guy down.’ I jumped out and caught him. I didn’t know what I was doing, she just said go get him and I went and got him. It turned out he was a psych evaluation patient and he ran out while they had their backs to him.

**It started as a beautiful day.** The next thing you know, we’re getting an ice storm. They sent us to the bottom of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Street Bridge because people were sliding backward into traffic. From there, they sent us an hour and a half away to another district because a bar exploded. That was my first day, and I was thinking, “This is awesome!”

“*Don’t lose sight of what we do, which is people work. Yes, we have to apply the law, but without people, you have no application.*”

**A chief once told me that police work is not an adventure** — well yeah it is. It can be fun, it can be stressful, it can be tiring, it can be boring — all that — and that’s an adventure from minute to minute. Things can go from zero to 100 and back to zero in 10 seconds.

**Whenever I first went to the video unit,** our basic role was as support for all the other major crime departments — homicide, robbery, burglary, fraud. About that time, we were seeing a ramp up of VHS surveillance video. VHS is a really poor format for gathering image intelligence. Because of the technical aspect of the surveillance, the images were just incredibly poor. But every now and then someone messed up and did it right, and you’d have to take the images and put them in a format allowing the courts and those that have to make a decision on a case to understand what they were seeing. And you’d have to have someone to present it to them in a logical, standardized format.

**I joined the Law Enforcement Video Association** and went through its third class at the FBI national academy. The testing at end of the course was very rigorous. It was all narrative, no right/wrong, no true/false. You had to write it out. Well, I blew up their test and they contacted my chief and said, ‘We’d like this guy to help us out.’ I became an instructor for the seminars they taught and a lab assistant. Over a period of years, I helped them build the world’s largest forensic video lab at the University of Indianapolis. At that same time, an old city alderman asked me to help with building what turned out to be Metro TV. I was a very busy boy.

**When I moved to this beat, I’d never policed out in the county,** so it was a huge change. This beat is mostly rural, but it includes some very over-the-top housing. So, I can go from policing in a cow pasture to multi-million dollar houses pretty quickly. It’s a lot of fun.

**Through my whole career, I feel more like a policeman** here than I ever did in the city.

They appreciate you. Whenever they call, they really need you. It can be about small matters or great matters, but the point is I can actually affect what is happening on my beat, simply by interacting with these folks.

**I would tell every recruit** that the job isn’t about the gun and badge, driving fast, telling the truth and shooting straight. That’s not what we do. What we do is interact with people. Never lose your humanity. The moment that you stop seeing someone else as a person, you should leave. This job is about supplying a need in a humanist fashion and being there for people in crisis. If you can do that and not take on their crisis, and recognize that because of your training and who you are, what you bring to the job and your ability to connect, then you can help people. That’s what this job is really about.

**Learn something new every day about your job.** As a patrolman, a detective or a street sergeant, this is a skilled trade. If you’re going to be a skilled tradesman, learn your job. Don’t lose sight of what we do, which is people work. Yes, we have to apply the law, but without people, you have no application.

**I have a lot of plans for having fun.** I don’t want to come completely out of the harness; I’ve got things to offer, I think. There’s a lot more to Jim than police work. My whole life has been exploring different challenges. That’s what I like. I like coming in, seeing what’s going on and coming up with a solution and leaving.

**Last fall my wife and I bought a motorcycle,** which is a lifelong love for me. So, we will be riding motorcycles and cruising, doing what we want to do. We take what we call two-lane vacations. We don’t do interstates. Two years ago we went to Ashville N.C. and picked up the Blue Ridge Parkway — and oh my gosh — if you ever have the chance, please do yourself a favor and go. It is incredible. 🏞️

Abbie Darst can be reached at [abbie.darst@ky.gov](mailto:abbie.darst@ky.gov) or (859) 622-6453.